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Peter Adkins is a lecturer specializing in modernist literature at the University of Edinburgh and has sustained a longstanding interest in the works of Virginia Woolf. His monograph, *The Modernist Anthropocene: Nonhuman Life and Planetary Change in James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and Djuna Barnes*, stems from the association between the modernist era and the concept of the Anthropocene and focuses on the presence of environmental issues and the thematic exploration of nature within the works of these three authors.

In the introductory chapter, “Modernism and the Anthropocene”, Adkins explains the historical and cultural context of the modernist period in England, along with the origin and evolution of the term “Anthropocene”. The chapter commences with a quotation from Woolf in 1929, which envisions the potential reality for writers in the twenty-first century, a full century subsequent to her own era: “If we live another century [...]” For Woolf, the survival of the human species was not assured, as she recognized the problematic attitudes individuals held towards the environment. She was convinced that in order for humanity to sustain its existence on the planet, a transformation in lifestyle was imperative. Humans had to realize that their

existence was determined not solely by interpersonal relationships but also by their connections to nature, such as to the sky and the trees. People ought to stop behaving selfishly and recognize the significance of other living organisms and different parts of nature. In light of these considerations, Woolf anticipated improved circumstances for women writers and for writing that prioritized environmental themes.

Adkins’s starting point begins with the current situation defined by the “sixth mass extinction” of species. Animals are facing extinction at a disproportionate rate due to climate change, deforestation, and pollution. The first signs of this were already noticeable in the early twentieth century, and several modernist writers captured this in their works. In addition to Woolf (1882–1941), who combined her environmental concerns with a moral appeal to her contemporaries not to make light of these changes, the risks of the emerging Anthropocene were also acknowledged by James Joyce (1882–1941) and the American writer Djuna Barnes (1892–1982). This trio of authors serve as the focus for Adkins. He chose these writers because they perceived the issue from a broader perspective and maintained a consistent interest in

420 the human relationship with the nonhuman world – including animals, plants, and the environment – often considering it on a planetary scale.

In the next part of the introduction, Adkins discusses the term “Anthropocene”, which is derived from the Greek word *anthropos*, meaning human, and the term *cene*, which is used in geology to refer to units of time that delineate geological epochs in the Earth’s history. The origin of the term is linked to the beginning of a new planetary epoch: for the first time in the Earth’s history, an animal species (*Homo sapiens sapiens*) emerged in a manner that so significantly transformed life on the planet that the repercussions of its activities would be observable millions of years into the future. Concurrently, human activities have created conditions on Earth that will lead to the extinction of humanity unless significant changes are made in the operational framework of human society. Adkins observes that, in contemporary usage, “Anthropocene” has gone beyond its original definition and is applied in various contexts.

According to Adkins, an important motivation for the book’s creation was the recognition that the history of the Anthropocene has developed in parallel with the history of modernity. The origins of the Anthropocene are linked to such modernizing factors as industrialization, imperialism, and capitalism. The literature of modernism also addressed these issues; critiques of the expanding Anthropocene can be associated with themes such as industrial pollution and climate change. Adkins provides a range of examples illustrating how phenomena associated with the climate crisis and environmental change, as well as the impact of technology and science on the natural world, were recorded, named, and described in modernist literature.

Each of the three selected authors was given two chapters by Adkins. He begins with the work of Joyce, which is explored in the chapters entitled “The Matter of Politics in

the Novels of James Joyce” and “James Joyce and the Revenge of Gaia”. In the former, Adkins mentions several works, including, in addition to the novel *Ulysses* (1922), the unfinished manuscript *Stephen Hero* (1903–1907) and the novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916). The chapter also traces the cultural and historical context of Joyce’s work, particularly examining the similarities and differences between his writings and the Irish Literary Revival – a cultural movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that sought to recognize and celebrate Ireland’s cultural and artistic heritage during the period of British colonization. While the Irish Literary Revival placed a significant emphasis on the importance of nature, which became a central focus of its interest, it was Joyce’s engagement with urbanism and cosmopolitanism that prompted him to address environmental issues and the state of the environment. What makes Joyce’s work exceptional is his profound interest in the raw material that makes up our planet and the meanings that humans ascribe to this material. This theme is most pronounced in his novel *Ulysses*. Joyce exhibited an interest not only in the natural environment but also in urban spaces and the socio-political and cultural discourse associated with nature. Adkins states that Joyce, influenced by his Irish heritage and the historical context of his era, recognized a correlation between the nature of an individual’s birthplace and their sense of national identity. This assertion is supported by Adkins with the views of Félix Guattari (1930–1992) as presented in his work *The Three Ecologies* (1989), which examines the relationship between ecology and nationalism. A considerable amount of the chapter is devoted to quotations from *Ulysses* that address themes of nature and environmental issues, which form the basis of Adkins’s argument regarding Joyce’s social and environmental consciousness. In the second “Joycean” chapter, entitled “James Joyce and the Revenge of Gaia”, Adkins conducts an

analysis of Molly, a female character from *Ulysses*. Molly, the narrator's spouse, is perceived by Adkins as a representation of Gaia, often referred to as Mother Nature. In the novel, Molly is identified as Gea-Tellus, with Gea (or Gaia) serving as the name for Mother Nature in Greek mythology, while Tellus represents a variant of this name in Roman mythology. At the end of the novel, the narrator returns to his wife, symbolizing a restoration of the human being to the natural world. In Joyce's final novel, *Finnegans Wake* (1939), the characters are linked to specific elements of nature, such as mountains, mounds, cities, rivers, flora, and rural landscapes. This association enriches the repertoire of nature-related motifs in Joyce's work and provides interesting examples of the possibilities of embodying aspects of nature through literary characters. This section of the monograph provides an explanation of the scientific hypothesis of Gaia alongside the theoretical framework of ecofeminism.

The chapter entitled "The Beastly Writing of Djuna Barnes" presents an introduction to the work of Barnes. Here, Adkins asks what it means to be perceived as a human being. It examines what behaviour is required for a member of a cultured human society to be considered a human being by other individuals within that society. Adkins engages with both published and unpublished works by Barnes in an attempt to explore how she used lexis and motifs associated with beasts and beastliness in order to discover how contemporary social norms defined the identity of human beings. This is directly related to the Anthropocene, which, among other things, also focuses on ideas of the crisis of humanity and of human identity. As a result of the onset of the Anthropocene, humans have increasingly framed their understanding of the surrounding environment through their subjective perceptions, leading to the belief that everything around them has its form only due to their determination of that form. This gradually created an identity cri-

sis for individuals, necessitating a re-evaluation of who they were in order to better comprehend their surroundings. Humans often define themselves in opposition to that which is different from them, considering everything that is not human as different. The basis of this interpretation is the novel *Nightwood* (1936), whose main character, Robin Vote, symbolizes a transformation from beast to human. Barnes gradually developed a "beastly aesthetic" in her literary work and she looked at questions about human identity in relation to the concept of animality, which she frequently associated with themes of gender and sexuality. Beastliness manifests in various forms within Barnes's texts. This phenomenon may be linked to isolation and suffering, leading to a beastly scream suggesting the inability of human language to capture and articulate certain emotions. Furthermore, it is associated with queer identity, which is understood as a disruption of heterosexual norms and an affront to conservative society. Here, the personal context of Barnes is important; she openly identified herself as a lesbian, and themes of queer identity are characteristic of her works. Beastliness is also linked to women's sexual agency, with misogynistic language employed to express it, thereby reinforcing the perception of women as animal bodies to be treated at will. Beastliness is associated with violence and destruction as well.

According to Adkins, the characters in Barnes's works exist as something between human and beast. They exist in a state of metamorphosis and evolution; consequently, they do not have a fixed form. Adkins frequently cites Barnes's correspondence with her friends and publishers, in which she comments on her works and the intentions behind the inclusion of beastliness within them.

Adkins starts the next chapter, entitled "Sex, Nature and Animal Life in Djuna Barnes's *Ryder*", with a story of how, when asked about her sexual orientation as a lesbian, Barnes responded by saying that if she

422 liked horses, she would become a horse. In doing so, she expressed her openness to crossing boundaries for the sake of her own emotional fulfilment. Adkins then explores Barnes's efforts to illustrate the close connection between established conceptions of sexual difference and environmental thinking that regulates human relationships to the natural world. Adkins suggests that, in light of the Anthropocene's emergence, it is imperative for humans to consider both intra- and inter-species dynamics in matters of relationality. The primary focus of his analysis is Barnes's first novel, *Ryder* (1928), where he explores the gaps in thinking about sexuality, nature, and animal life.

An excerpt from a critical text by Woolf, in which the writer evaluated a biography by Constance Hill entitled *Mary Russell Mitford and Her Surroundings*, begins the next chapter, entitled "The Sympathetic Climate of Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*". In this work, Woolf faulted the biographer for focusing too much on facts and failing to make the literary subject a living being, while also criticizing the author for not caring about the physical setting. Following the excerpt, Adkins explains how Woolf emphasized situating humans within a more-than-human world, and he points to the fact that Woolf paid close attention to the weather in almost every entry in the diaries from her youth. Scholarly analysis indicates that climate had a significant role in her literary work. This presents an opportunity for Adkins to elaborate on climate as a concept and to explain its meanings, given that it encompasses a broader scope than weather alone. For him, this concept requires careful observation and a detailed recording of climatic changes and variations. From the seventeenth century onwards, it was believed that climatic conditions directly influenced the cultural conditions of a country. Adkins has no doubt that Woolf, as an open-minded woman interested in scientific knowledge, also paid attention to scientific findings related to climate. Her novel *Orlando* (1928) is an

example of "climate fiction", a literary genre also known as "cli-fi", characterized primarily by the narrative dramatization of the impacts of climate change. In *Orlando*, Woolf combines historical and climatic change; as Adkins suggests, climate is not only central to the novel's historical narrative but also fundamental to its representations of gender and sexuality. This phenomenon arises because, for Woolf, climate encompasses not only the weather but also the very material of which human beings are made and therefore the material from which their gender identity is derived. Adkins asserts that Woolf's approach to climate means that the boundary between nature and culture is not strictly defined in her texts. The two concepts are closely intertwined, and an understanding of both is essential for grasping the complexities of human existence.

In the chapter entitled "The Disturbing Future of Virginia Woolf's Late Writing", Adkins focuses on Woolf's later work, with a particular emphasis on her unfinished novella, *Between the Acts* (1941). In its background, one senses the experience of war, as well as an awareness of fundamental social change and the existential threat to human civilization. The present, as portrayed in literature from this period, is disrupted by an awareness of the future that provokes anxiety, as Woolf works with the assumption that "we" may not be part of the future ("we" can have different meanings). Woolf assumes the existence of a future and does not fear the extinction of all life; however, she acknowledges that the future may not have much in common with the present, especially as far as human existence and the existence of other species is concerned. In her view, humans may no longer serve as the foundation for the future perception of reality. The disappearance of established life forms may lead to the emergence of new, as yet unknown, species. Adkins states that Woolf raised doubts about the future, especially concerning the question of the relevance of her literary work and

that of her contemporaries. He even speculates that fears about the future of the planet, combined with her mental state, may have contributed to Woolf's decision to take her own life.

In the final chapter, entitled "Fallout: Modernism in the Nuclear Anthropocene", Adkins briefly explains the situation after 1941, which, in light of the deaths of Woolf and Joyce, he associates with the end of the modernist era. In his view, the development of nuclear weapons marked a crucial moment in human history and in the context of the Anthropocene, which was based on the belief in the superiority of the human species and which had an impact on further changes in the exploitation of nature. He uses the term "Nuclear Anthropocene" to refer to the period after the development of these weapons. Furthermore, he sheds light on the life and artistic trajectory of Barnes until her death in 1982, also in connection with the concept of the Nuclear Anthropocene. He concludes by briefly returning to the motivation that led him to write the monograph. This motivation was his belief that, through an examination of the works of the selected authors, it was possible to confirm the presence of environmental themes and to identify their varied forms in the literature of modernism.

Adkins's monograph is the result of several years of research. The publication's language is very professional, and the analyses of the selected literary works are enhanced by definitions of scientific research and theories relevant to all issues under examination. The scholarly insertions within each chap-

ter contribute to forming an overall picture of the modernist Anthropocene through the perspective of the selected authors as well as through the context of contemporary reality. Certainly, having prior knowledge of the literary works under discussion is an advantage for the reader. The research conducted by Adkins on the interconnections between modernism and the Anthropocene can be regarded as both original and beneficial. Considering the temporal distance between the present and the modernist period, it might seem that modernist works are a thing of the past and lack relevance to contemporary environmental and social issues; however, Adkins's research proves otherwise. Through comprehensive literary analyses, a precise interpretation of concepts, and the contextualization of individual theories alongside relevant social and cultural contexts, he has captured the importance of the position of environmental themes in the modernist period. Furthermore, he adeptly connects historical perspectives to contemporary issues, highlighting the ongoing thematic relevance of the selected authors' works. His approach may serve as a source of inspiration for similar analyses and research in other national literatures, which could be particularly beneficial in light of the specific natural conditions of each country. Each national literature possesses the capacity to offer a distinct and novel perspective on environmental issues and the challenges associated with ecological change caused by the Anthropocene.

Translation John Peter Butler Barrer

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